

## **CODE OF ETHICS**

*The Ombuds Council Member, as a designated neutral, has the responsibility of treating matters that are brought to his/her attention “In Confidence” unless given permission to do otherwise. Exceptions are where there appears to be imminent threat of serious harm to individuals or the safety or security of the facility or environment; or where not reporting would cause the Laboratory to be in violation of the law or other reporting requirement.*

*The Ombuds Council Member must take all reasonable steps to protect any records and files pertaining to “In Confidence” discussions from inspection by all other persons, including management.*

*The Ombuds Council Member should not testify in any formal judicial or administrative hearing about concerns brought to his/her attention.*

*When making recommendations, the Ombuds Council Member has the responsibility to suggest actions or policies that will be equitable to all parties.*

*The Ombuds Council Member must advise visitors of the limits of confidentiality available when using the OCR and advise the visitor of other options available.*

# STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

The mission of the Ombuds Council is to provide a confidential, neutral and informal process which facilitates fair and equitable resolutions to concerns that arise in the organization. In performing this mission, the Ombuds Council Member serves as an information and communication resource, upward feedback channel, advisor, dispute resolution expert and change agent.

While serving in this role:

1. We adhere to The Ombuds Council Code of Ethics.
2. We base our practice on confidentiality as defined in that Code of Ethics.
3. An Ombuds Council Member should not use the names of individuals or mention their employers without express permission.
4. During the problem-solving process an Ombuds Council Member may make known information as long as the identity of the individual contacting the office is not compromised.
5. Any data that we prepare should be scrutinized carefully to safeguard the identity of each individual whose concerns are represented.
6. Publicity about our office conveys the confidential nature of our work, as well as our neutral, informal role.
7. We will hold communications “In Confidence” and resist releasing information to anyone except as part of informal resolution activities.
8. An Ombuds Council Member keeps no “case” records on behalf of the organization. If a member finds working notes necessary to manage the work, the member will follow a consistent and standard practice for safehandling and appropriate destruction of any notes.
9. We exercise discretion whether to act upon a concern of an individual contacting the office. An Ombuds Council Member may initiate action on a problem he or she perceives directly.
10. We are designated neutrals and in this role remain independent of ordinary line and staff structures.
11. An Ombuds Council Member strives for objectivity and impartiality.
12. The Ombuds Council Member has a responsibility to consider the concerns of all parties known to be involved in a dispute.
13. We do not serve as advocates for any person in a dispute within an organization; however, we do advocate for fair processes and their fair administration for all.

14. We help develop a range of responsible options to resolve problems and facilitate discussion to identify the best options. When possible, we help people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.
15. An Ombuds Council Member should exercise discretion before entering into any additional affiliations, roles or actions that may impact the neutrality or perceived neutrality of the function within the organization.
16. We do not make binding decisions, mandate policies or adjudicate issues for the organization.
17. We remain an informal and off-the-record resource. Formal investigations will be done by others as appropriate.
18. We do not act as “agent” for the organization and we do not accept notice on behalf of the organization. We will always refer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.
19. Individuals should not be required to meet with an Ombuds Council Member. All interactions with the member should be voluntary.
20. Through the Ombuds Office, we provide feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices without breaching confidentiality or anonymity. We identify new problems and we provide support for responsible systems change.
21. We will strive to keep professionally current and competent by pursuing continuing education and training relevant to the ombudsman profession.
22. We will endeavor to be worthy of the trust placed in us by the Laboratory and its workforce.

## **GLOSSARY**

### **Confidential**

Confidential describes communications, or a source of communications, which are intended not to be disclosed except as consistent with the Laboratory’s policies and practices. In an Ombuds Council Member’s work confidentiality is often accomplished by providing anonymity to the source of communications. When the source of a communication is kept secret or private, this is known as an anonymous communication.

### **Independent**

An Ombuds Council Member functions independent of line management as well as from advocacy functions for non-managers.

### **Neutrality**

We do not serve as advocates for any person in a dispute within an organization; however, we do advocate for fair processes and their fair administration.

When making recommendations, the member has the responsibility to suggest actions or policies that will be equitable to all parties.